

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Rocky Mountain Arsenal

*National  
Wildlife  
Refuge*



*Rocky Mountain  
Arsenal National  
Wildlife Refuge is  
an island of wildlife  
habitat surrounded  
by a sea of urban  
development.*

*Located in the heart  
of Colorado, the  
Refuge provides an  
excellent opportunity  
for visitors to learn  
about and enjoy  
prairie wildlife and  
plants.*

## A Unique Refuge



*Designed by  
J.N. "Ding"  
Darling, this  
blue goose  
has become the  
symbol of the  
National Wildlife  
Refuge System.*

Prior to 1880, the Colorado landscape east of the Rocky Mountains was gentle, rolling swells of shortgrass prairie. Through twists and turns of history, the prairie was changed and scarred. Part of the land that was once inhabited by Plains Indians and settlers was transformed into a chemical weapons manufacturing facility in 1942. As chemical weapons production wound down at the war's end, part of the facility was leased to Shell Chemical Company for the production of pesticides and herbicides. Military and civilian production ceased in 1982, and in 1987, environmental cleanup of the Arsenal began in earnest and may continue until 2011, funded by the U.S. Army and the Shell Oil Company.



Denver Post

*Napalm bomb assembly line, August 1952.*

In 1986, a communal roost of bald eagles was discovered, prompting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to become deeply involved at this facility. Public interest triggered an intense and successful grassroots effort to have the Arsenal declared a National Wildlife Refuge. Established by an act of Congress in 1992, Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) provides habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, and provides environmental education and

wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities for visitors. The Refuge consists of nearly 17,000 acres of open prairie for wildlife. In an effort to return the land to a more natural state, a large prairie restoration project is underway.



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*Bald eagles winter at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR.*

Those who venture onto the Refuge will, in fact, find refuge themselves. A quick getaway from the city, the Refuge provides a unique opportunity to become immersed in nature. Sounds of city traffic give way to chirps and songs of birds and the wind rustling through trees and grasses. Trails meander through prairie, woodlands, and wetlands, offering glimpses of wildlife and plant life.

This is a place to enjoy, discover, experience, and learn about the hidden riches of the prairie. It is a place like no other - one visit will not be enough.

## Habitat Management

One of the primary objectives of the Refuge is to restore and manage the land to provide quality wildlife habitat. Previous land uses, including military and industrial operations and farming, resulted in the loss of native species and establishment of non-native plants, including some noxious weeds. Approximately 8,000 acres of disturbed land is being restored with native prairie grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs.



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*Blue grama is a native prairie grass.*

Weeds are the major obstacle to establishing native grasses. An Integrated Pest Management Program incorporates a variety of mechanical, biological, and chemical controls. Prescribed burning and mowing are additional techniques used to manage habitat.

## Refuge Wildlife

Surrounded by a city of 2 million people, the pocket of land that is the Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR supports more than 330 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. From wintering bald eagles to nesting burrowing owls, an abundance of wildlife is available for visitors to view during each season of the year.



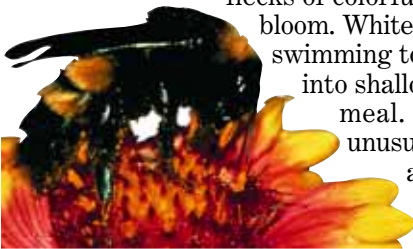
©W. Shattil/B. Rozinski

*Burrowing owls reside at the Refuge each summer.*

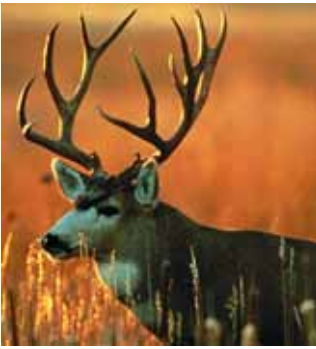
The cheerful chorus of mountain bluebirds, western tanagers, and other migratory songbirds proclaim the arrival of spring. Swainson's hawks, lark buntings, northern orioles, and red-winged and yellow-headed blackbirds make their annual spring appearance. Prairie dog pups venture out of their burrows, fawns emerge from locust thickets, and great horned owl chicks peek out from their nests.

Warm summer breezes flow through fields of prairie grasses dotted with flecks of colorful wildflowers in full bloom. White pelicans can be seen swimming together, herding fish into shallow water for a quick meal. Perhaps the most unusual summer residents are the burrowing owls, which nest and raise their young in abandoned prairie dog burrows.

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*A busy bee collects nectar from a blanket flower.*



*A mule deer buck strolls through fall foliage.*

Bullsnakes are the most numerous of all the reptiles. Frogs, salamanders, and turtles can be encountered within the various wetlands. Known for being one of the best warm water catch-and-release fisheries in Colorado, the Refuge lakes produce bluegill and largemouth bass.

Trees and shrubs, dressed in autumn hues of orange, yellow, and gold, adorn lake edges. Refuge lakes provide a haven for migrating ducks such as pintails, shovelers, redheads, and lesser scaup. Mule deer bucks and white-tailed deer bucks with their impressive antlers can be seen.



*Coyotes are the “song dogs” of the prairie.*



*Ferruginous hawks grapple over their prey.*

A blanket of winter snow covering the prairie makes prey highly visible to predators, including ferruginous hawks and coyotes, which are attracted to the Refuge’s large population of black-tailed prairie dogs. The large number of majestic bald eagles that return to the Refuge each winter is a rewarding sight.

Throughout the year, mule deer can be seen browsing on dried plants and tender leaves while the more reclusive white-tailed deer stay close to the wooded areas. Keep watch on prairie dog towns where coyotes search burrows for prairie dogs and other small mammals. Prairie dogs, which manipulate the grasslands by burrowing and grazing, are “keystone” species because so many other animals such as hawks, burrowing owls, badgers, rattlesnakes, and bald eagles depend on them for survival.

## Wildlife Research

Wildlife research on the Refuge increases our knowledge about numerous resident and migrant wildlife species. Refuge staff, other governmental agencies, and university researchers study the effects of contaminants in wildlife health, habitat restoration, and the ecology of various species.

Studies are conducted on plants and wildlife throughout the entire food chain. Researchers investigate grasses, fish and aquatic invertebrates, song birds, deer, small mammals, and top predators such as coyotes and raptors. These investigations provide managers with valuable information to manage

Refuge natural resources and ensure that environmental cleanup protects wildlife.



©Michael Mauro

*Biologists use telemetry for tracking wildlife.*



## Environmental Education

Do fish have a sense of smell? What happens to insects during the winter? Why do prairie dogs jump, yip, and bark? Children and adults can learn the answers to these questions and many more during



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*Two students are captivated by their discovery.*

environmental education programs at the Refuge. The unique history of this site and its close proximity to a large urban population make it a great place to teach children about the connection among all living things, the environmental consequences of human activity, and the responsibility people have to care for their environment.

Through these programs, children are introduced to the natural world at the Refuge. Thousands of metro area students have participated in Refuge staff-guided programs since 1991. Training sessions and the “Home Is Habitat” curriculum is provided to teachers so they can lead field trips for their classes. Education partnerships have been established with schools and conservation organizations to help build long-term relationships with students and instill a sense of “ownership” in the Refuge. A Time Capsule traveling education kit, complete with activities, also is available for classroom use.

*“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”*

— SOURCE UNKNOWN

# Rocky Mountain Arsenal

## *National Wildlife Refuge*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  <b>Refuge Boundary</b>    |  <b>Guided Tour Route</b> |
|  <b>Interstate Highway</b> |  <b>Trail</b>             |
|  <b>U.S. Highway</b>       |  <b>Lakes</b>             |
|  <b>State Highway</b>      |  <b>Wetlands</b>          |
|  <b>Visitor Center</b>     |  <b>Amphitheater</b>      |
|  <b>Viewing Areas</b>      |  <b>Fishing Pier</b>      |
|  <b>Shuttle Stop</b>       |  <b>Shelter</b>           |

72nd Avenue

Staff/Service  
Entrance  
West Gate

Lake Mary

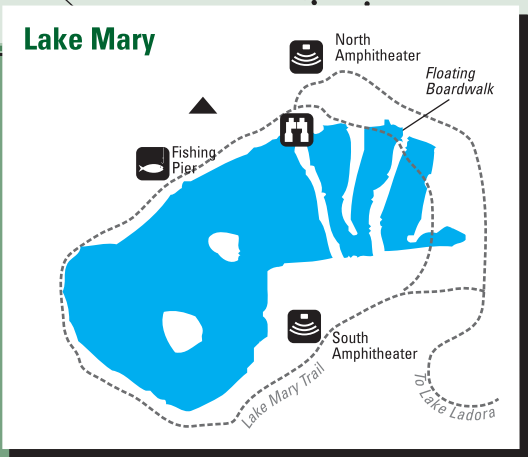
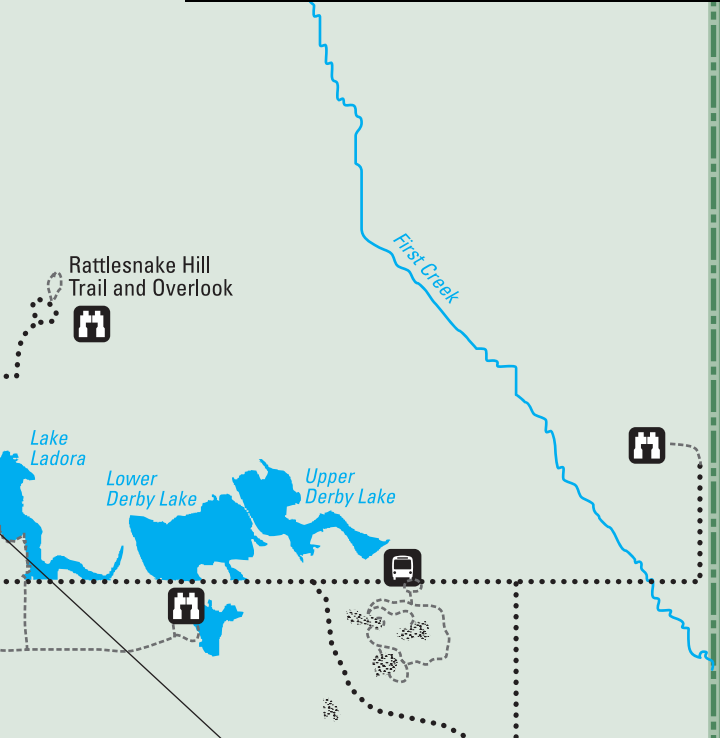
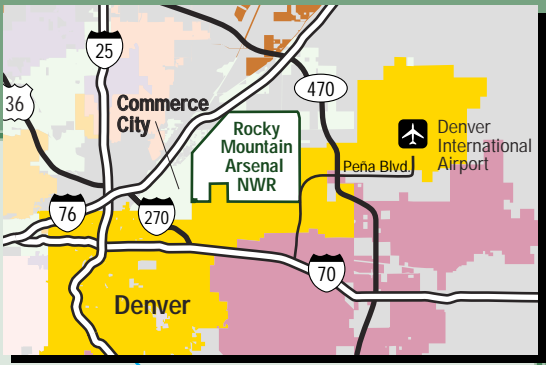
56th Avenue

Public Entrance  
South Gate

Quebec

Havana





## Exploring and Enjoying the Refuge

Visitors can drop-in at the Refuge each weekend, without making reservations, to take part in a variety of wildlife observation and wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities. Bring your cameras and binoculars, look closely, and uncover a sanctuary rich with plants and animals. The Refuge may be closed on short notice. Please call before your visit for hours of operation.

### *Hiking Trails*

Approximately 9 miles of interpretive and recreational walking trails are available seasonally for wildlife viewing and photography. Refuge trails take visitors along lake edges, through prairie, shrubland, and woodland settings.

### *Fishing*

Refuge lakes are a popular attraction for anglers of all ages. Fishing for largemouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegill provides a great opportunity for anglers to get “hooked.” From April to October, you can enjoy catch-and-release sport fishing. Call the Refuge for the current fishing schedule.



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*This young angler is all smiles over her catch.*

### *Trolley-Tram Tours*

All aboard!  
The 2 hour trolley-tram tour can be a fun and interactive way to see the Refuge. View wildlife while learning about the site’s history and cleanup.

Tours are by reservation only and are available year-round.



USFWS

*Visitors enjoy the open-air Refuge tour.*

*Nature  
Programs*

Hayrides, moonlit hikes, bike tours, wildlife programs, and other special presentations are offered at various times year-round by reservation only. Most programs provide a field experience along with a short tour.

*Special Events*

A number of special events are offered at various times throughout the year. One special event is the celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week each October. This event offers fun for the entire family with activities, programs, tours, and live animal displays.

*Visitor Center*

Have fun learning about nature through interactive exhibits and crafts found in the Wildlife Learning Lab. A bee tree exhibit, complete with active hives, allows visitors to learn about honey bee behavior. Browse through the bookstore and gift shop for that special reminder of your visit.

For additional information about wildlife programs or to make program reservations, call the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 303 / 289 0930.

**Accessibility**

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 7-1-1 for a free connection to the state transfer relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from the speech and hearing impaired. For more information or to address accessibility needs, please contact the Refuge staff at 303 / 289 0232 or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

## Refuge Regulations

Visitor safety and wildlife conservation are top priorities at the Refuge. Access onto the Refuge is carefully controlled because of the on-going environmental cleanup. At times, sections of the Refuge may be closed due to wildlife needs or other projects. Please follow these guidelines to ensure the continued protection of the Refuge's natural resources and to help make your visit safe and enjoyable.

### Please Remember To:

- Obey posted speed limits; wildlife is sometimes near and on roads.
- Protect habitat by parking in designated areas only.
- Take your litter off the Refuge and dispose of it properly.
- Stay on designated trails.



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*A moonset over the Refuge's Lake Ladora.*

### *The Following Are Prohibited:*

- Hunting, boating, camping, picnicking.
- Pets, with exception of aid dogs.
- Collecting, removing, or disturbing any animal, plant, or historical object.
- Possession of controlled substances or alcoholic beverages.
- Possession of firearms or weapons.

## Opportunities to Volunteer

Volunteers are our connections to our neighboring communities. Many volunteers donate their time because they care about our natural resources. Volunteers conduct public use and environmental education programs, assist with wildlife and habitat management projects, trail and facilities maintenance, and perform clerical and administrative duties. Volunteers also assist the Refuge's non-profit cooperating association, The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Society, formed to help the Refuge fulfill its mission.

You can become a valuable resource in your community by joining our volunteer team. It's a great way to make a difference! For more information, contact the Volunteer Coordinator at 303 / 289 0232.



*A Refuge volunteer teaches students about animal adaptations.*

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National Wildlife Refuge  
Building 111  
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303 / 289 0232  
303 / 289 0579 Fax  
<http://rockymountainarsenal.fws.gov>

For State transfer relay service  
TTY / Voice: 711

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information  
1 800 / 344 WILD

September 2003



CELEBRATING A  
**CENTURY**  
of CONSERVATION